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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 003121

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SE, EUR/RPM, SA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/05/2014

TAGS: MOPS PREL TU AF

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: TURKEY MAY RECONSIDER WITHDRAWAL OF OFFER TO LEAD PRT

REF: ANKARA 2947 AND PREVIOUS

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric S. Edelman. Reasons: 1.5 (B and D).

¶1. (C) During a June 4 meeting that included UK Ambassador Westmacott to discuss Cyprus (septel), Ambassador again encouraged MFA U/S Ziyal to consider establishing a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the west or the south of Afghanistan. Ziyal was adamant that Turkey would not establish a PRT in either location. He complained that Representative Lantos had characterized Turkey's contributions to Afghanistan thus far as "disgraceful," noting that Turkey had led ISAF II during a difficult eight-month period in 2002-2003, had sent three helos to Kabul to support ISAF operations, and was preparing to deploy the Istanbul High Readiness Force (HRF) to Kabul in February 2005 to assume ISAF command if NATO so chooses. Ambassadors urged Ziyal not to withdraw Turkey's offer and to consider working out a compromise, as US Ambassador to NATO Burns suggested earlier to Turkish PermRep Uzumcu. Ziyal agreed that it would not look good for Turkey to "walk away" on the eve of the NATO Summit and said he would "think about it."

¶2. (C) Earlier that day, MFA DDG for South Asian Affairs Aydin Evirgen told deputy pol-mil counselor that Turkey had withdrawn its PRT offer. Evirgen said Ankara's decision was "final:" both FM Gul and PM Erdogan had approved the decision, and the MFA had instructed its mission at NATO to advise SHAPE and NATO accordingly. Evirgen said the GOT took the decision because it was clear that Turkey's thinking on PRTs was not consistent with SHAPE's. He argued the "final straw" was a letter that the COS of SHAPE had sent recently to the Turkish General Staff (TGS) "pressing" the Turks to establish a PRT in the west or the south. Given SHAPE's position, there was "no need to prolong the matter any further," Evirgen concluded. When asked whether Ankara might reconsider its position, Evirgen replied "No. I believe the decision is final."

¶3. (C) Comment: Even if Ziyal decides to try to reverse the decision to withdraw Turkey's PRT offer, we doubt Ankara will agree to locate its first PRT in the west or the south. Our choice will most likely be to either agree to a location in the north or accept that the NATO Summit hosts will not contribute a PRT to Afghanistan.

EDELMAN